



Water Cleanup Plans

Granger Drain Fecal Coliform TMDL

Issue

Granger Drain and its watershed includes approximately 18,000 acres of prime agricultural land located in the lower reaches of the Yakima River Basin, near the city of Granger.

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) has compiled and analyzed data from various water quality studies in the Granger Drain watershed that show high concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria in the water. Because of these bacteria levels, Granger Drain has been identified as a priority for study and cleanup.

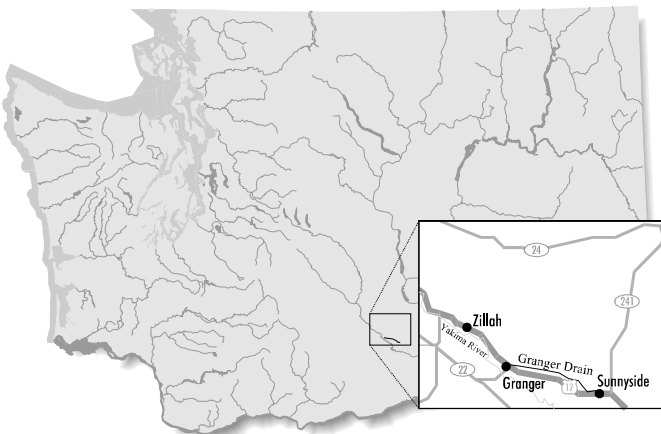


What is a Water Cleanup Plan or TMDL?

Federal law requires states to identify pollution sources in waters that fail to meet state water quality standards and to develop Water Cleanup Plans, also called Total Maximum Daily Loads or TMDLs, for restoring waters to good water quality. The plan identifies 1) sources of pollution in waters that fail to meet state water quality standards, and 2) strategies to control pollution. TMDLs establish limits on the quantity of pollutants the river can receive and still be able to maintain water quality standards.

Why is fecal coliform bacteria a concern?

- Fecal coliform bacteria live in warm-blooded animals and can serve as an “indicator species” showing that disease causing or pathogenic organisms may be present.
- People could be at risk of contracting some diseases associated with fecal coliform bacteria if they come in contact with contaminated water.
- Federal law requires the state to protect the “most sensitive” beneficial uses found in waterbodies, including the ability to swim, fish and recreate on the state’s lakes, rivers and streams.



What have we found in the Granger Drain?

During the past decade, fecal coliform bacteria concentrations have been substantially reduced in Granger Drain, due to better management at cattle feedlots, dairies and small farms. In recent years, however, the rate of reduction has leveled off and bacteria pollution still remains 10 times greater than allowed under state water quality standards.

What activities influence fecal coliform concentrations?

Studies indicate that animal feeding operations and manure land application practices are the principal sources of fecal coliform pollution within the Granger Drain and its watershed.

Some activities that have helped to reduce fecal coliform pollution include better application and management of dairy manure, fencing to keep animals out of streams, and improved irrigation methods that reduce runoff from agricultural lands. Local work groups will explore additional activities to reduce bacteria loads as part of the ongoing TMDL process.

What do you think?

Input is being sought from local groups and citizens to help develop a plan for continuing to decrease fecal coliform concentrations in the Granger Drain and its watershed. Information gathered will be used to develop a strategy on how, when and where activities can be implemented to reduce fecal coliform pollution to meet water quality standards.



For more information on the Granger Drain Fecal Coliform TMDL, please call Gregory Bohn at (509) 454-4174, or you may email to gboh461@ecy.wa.gov. You also may write in care of Department of Ecology, 15 W. Yakima Ave., Suite 200, Yakima, WA 98902.

You can also visit our Webpage at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/index.html

Pictured at left is an aerial photo showing a brown plume of suspended sediments and other pollutants entering the lower Yakima River from the mouth of Granger Drain.